

CSF 8: Understand Internet Culture

Building a successful website requires that the website designer fully understand and respect internet culture and norms of behaviour. The website that conforms to the rules of internet culture should be easy to use and navigate, visually appealing, and load in a relative short time.

I. Ease of Use and Navigation

A good website should provide easy and organized interface so that the users could easily find vital information and get access to the goods or services. Schaffer (2000) states, one reason customers leave a website without purchasing is because they are not able to navigate their way through the site. Moreover, once a customer has had a negative experience on a website, they are less prone to revisit the site, which results in even a greater loss of potential revenue.

In our usability, we design two tasks to test the ease of navigation and use. Two groups of users, the new user group and the experienced user group, were asked to register as a charity, and to donate a ticket as a donor. For both tasks, the experienced users used significantly shorter time to complete the tasks than the new users. This result indicates that the website is not easy to use, as one has to get used to where the things are before he could find the stuff. Difficulties in navigation and use will turn the charities and the donors away.

The most important cause of difficulties in navigation is the information is poorly organized. For example, the headings on the Kids Up Front (Calgary) Program web page are listed in the following sequence: Our Programs; Scalping; What Kids Need; and Get

Involved. There is no point putting “Scalping” (which tends to mislead the users) before the “Get Involved” (which is Kids Up Front’s ultimate goal). One user comments that, “They need to organize the information better. This site isn’t helpful. Sitting here searching for information may just change my mind about donating – it’s not worth the hassle.”

Other than the disordered organization, most of the web pages are filled with “a wall of text”. To avoid this, we could use subheads, bullets, highlighted keywords, short paragraphs and a simple writing style.

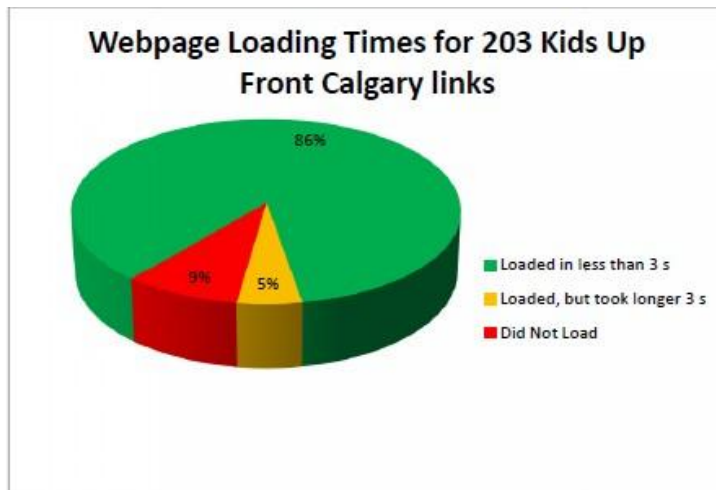
II. Visual Appeal

Visual Appeal relates to the aesthetic and affective aspect of the website design in terms of visual as well as audio character, and the creative elements embodied within the site (Korgaonkar et al). The enjoyment positively relates to attitude toward the use of websites and whether users intended to visit the site frequently (Van der Heijden).

The usability study results show that the Kids Up Front (Calgary) web pages are not eye-catching due to the insufficient use of graphs, colors and fonts. One user comments that, “There is no color – the site is boring, even annoying. It’s ugly and does not hold my attention at all. It needs color!” And another suggests that, “Put a couple more pictures of happy kids, boldly write important information and use useful headings like ‘Register Your Charity’ and ‘Donate Now’”. Also, it would be more impressive to add more kids’ happy faces, after all, the Kids Up Front is founded to satisfy the needs of kids.

III. Page Load Time

A short page load time provides the users more satisfactory browsing experience. The pie chart below shows the average webpage loading times for 203 Kids Up Front (Calgary) links:



The average page load time (not including pages/links that did not load) is 1.17 seconds, which is very fast. The short time is likely due to a lack of graphical elements on the webpage, which indicates that Kids Up Front can increase the number of graphics on their pages without worrying about load time being too long.

However, we notice that there are quite a few broken links on the website, which lead to negative navigate experience.

Overall, Kids Up Front (Calgary) does not fully conform to the internet culture and present itself from the user perspective. Although the load time is satisfactory, the website is not easy to navigate and use, and is not visually appealing. We give a 1 out 5 on this critical success factor.